
Mr. *EVANS*'s
SERMON
FOR
Reformation of Manners.

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MR. ENNALS

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FOR

Reformation of Manners.

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A
SERMON

Preach'd at *Salters-Hall*,

TO THE
SOCIETIES
FOR

Reformation of Manners,

IN THE
Cities of *London* and *Westminster*,

JUNE 30th, 1707. K

By *JOHN EVANS*.

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S E R M O N
F O R
Reformation of Manners.

Ecclef. VIII. 11.

*Because Sentence against an evil Work is not
executed speedily, therefore the Heart of
the Sons of Men is fully set in them to do
evil.*

IT has been the Wisdom of all Governments to annex the Sanctions of Rewards and Punishments to their Laws; not only for expressing their own Authority, but as the best way to secure the Observation of them. The Blessed God himself, who framed Human Nature, and therefore without Doubt must understand it best, made Use of this

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Method with Man in Innocence, and has carried it on in the course of his Government ever since.

But next to the Establishment of good Laws, the steady Execution of them is necessary to give them their Effect. All their Force and Vigour is soon lost without it. You were justly sensible of This, when you engag'd in that Noble Work, for which I hope future Generations *will rise up and call you Blessed.*

Indeed the inflicting of Punishment cannot be imagin'd pleasant in its self to any generous Mind. 'Tis * *God's strange Work*, and those that have any Thing God-like in them, will rather desire the Welfare than the Uneasiness of other People, when a greater Good does not require it. And to a Christian it has the more melancholy Aspect, because it rose upon the Ruins of the Fall, and commenc'd its Being with the Loss of Innocence. But in the present Condition of this lapsed World, 'tis become absolutely necessary that some should concern Themselves in this Self-denying Work. It were an Unkindness to Mankind in

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general, and even to the Offenders themselves to suffer notorious Crimes to go unpunish'd. For, *Because Sentence against an Evil Work is not executed speedily, therefore, &c.* Which contains this Observation confirm'd by Experience ;

That there is a Proneness in Deprav'd Human Nature to abuse Impunity to the Increase of Wickedness.

Therefore the Heart of the Sons of Men is fully set in them to do Evil. A very Emphatical Expression : Which may either signify their Progress from one Sin to another. That whereas they began with a particular Crime, when they see *That* conniv'd at, they proceed to *Another*, till they have walk'd the Round of Transgression. Or it may denote, that Sin becomes their full Employment. They are encourag'd to shake off all the Remains of Goodness ; their Hearts are full of nothing but Sin, and they stick at none ; like those describ'd by St. Peter ; *|| Having Eyes full of Adultery, and that cannot cease from Sin : --- an Heart they have exercised with covetous Practices.* Or their Boldness and Confidence in every Sin may

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be design'd by the Phrase, as the same Apostle says to *Ananias*, * *Why has Satan fill'd thine Heart to lie to the Holy Ghost?* How has he wrought thee up to such a daring Boldness, as to venture on a Sin of this Nature? The Translation of the **LXXII.** gives the Words this Turn. *Δια τὸ ἐπληροφώθη καρδία ὑῶν τῇ ἀνδρώπῃ ἐν αὐτοῖς τὸ ποιῆσαι τὸ πονηρόν.* *Therefore their Hearts have a Plerophory to do Evil.* The same Word is frequently us'd in the † New Testament for the Confidence and Assurance of Christians in their Holy Course; whereby they are imbolden'd to a free Approach to God through Christ, and a resolute Conflict with Difficulties and Dangers, and to go on without Hesitation in their Way. Such an Assurance in Sinning Ill Men gain by Impunity, that makes 'em run without Fear or Concern upon any evil Course.

But one Thing possibly may seem to make my Text an improper Subject for this Audience, which I would endeavour therefore to clear before I proceed. The

* *Acts* 5. 3.

† *Heb.* 10. 22. *chap.* 6. 11. *Rom.* 14. 5, &c.

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Words are generally understood only of the Sentence of *God* against Evil Works ; and not of any denounced by Human Laws, which alone come within your Sphere. But not to say, that I see no Necessity from the Context for such a Limitation ; I'll suppose the Sacred Penman to have that directly in his Eye. Yet the Observation must be allow'd to hold true of the Non-Execution of Human Punishments as well as of the Divine. But that is not all ; there is a near Connexion between God's Forbearance and your Design. For the Necessity of present Restraints upon Sinners arises from the Delay of God's Judgment, and the ill Use they generally make of it. And this is the main Argument I intend to insist upon. And my Discourse shall be carry'd on in this Method.

I. I would briefly set this Argument in a clear Light out of the Text before us. And then,

II. Proceed on that Foundation to apply my self more particularly to the Business of the present Assembly.

First,

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First, I would set this Argument in a clear Light out of the Text before us, in a few Propositions.

I. *There is a Sentence of God against Evil Works, which certainly should be the most effectual Restraint from Sin.* God is the rightful Owner, the Supream Ruler of us all, whose Authority ought to have the greatest Weight with us. It should be enough to determine us against any thing, if God pronounce but a Sentence of Disapprobation upon it, if he declares it *an abominable Thing which he hates.* But He has shewn Obedience to be our Interest as well as our Duty, by his *exceeding great and precious Promises* to them that do well; and by the Revelation of *his Wrath against all Sin and Ungodliness of Men.* The Light of Nature discovered this in part, by which they who had no better Advantages were enabled to pass a Sentence on themselves within their own Breasts, ** accusing or else excusing.* But Revelation has made the Discovery brighter, and the Evidence more indisputable.

And 'tis impossible to conceive a Method more admirably fitted to keep the

* Rom. 2. 14.

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World in Order, than the Law of God, and the Sentence he has denounc'd with so much Solemnity against Sin. This carries infinitely greater Terror in it than any Thing that Men can threaten or inflict. What can be so *fearful a Thing* as to fall into the Hands of the living God ! Who || is able to destroy both Soul and Body in Hell ; while Men at farthest can only * kill the Body, and then have no more that they can do. 'Tis an unparallel'd Instance of the Stupidity of Sinners, that They can hear and read the Terrors of the Lord unmov'd, and yet be restrain'd by the little Punishments that Men like Themselves can inflict : That They can tremble in the Presence of an Earthly Magistrate, and make light of the Judge of all the Earth. If Divine Threatnings were firmly believed, and allow'd their just Efficacy, there would need no other. For They extend to all Sins and Sinners ; such Crimes as Human Laws either cannot or ought not to take Cognizance of ; and such Criminals as by their Power and Interest are ordinarily beyond the Reach of Human Censures. But,

|| *Matth.* 10. 28.

* *Luke* 12. 4.

2. *The Sentence of God against Sin and Sinners is not always or commonly executed immediately upon the Provocation given.* Sometimes indeed † *He is known by the Judgments which he executes here.* He may strike a Criminal dead in the Fact, or make the Sin to be read in the Punishment. Now and then to awaken a drowsy World, and shew that he is no careless Spectator of Human Actions, he gives a Specimen of his Power, and an Earnest of the Future Judgment upon particular Men, or larger united Bodies: And especially on the last, because there is no Opportunity in another World for judging Societies as such. Of this Nature was the Floud, that swept away the Old World in the Days of Noah. Such was the dismal Overthrow of Sodom and Gomorrha, which * *God made an Example to them that after should live ungodly; ----*
 || *An Example suffering the Vengeance of eternal Fire.* And I believe diligent Observers would find a greater Uniformity in God's Proceedings with Communities, than we commonly apprehend.

† *Psal. 9. 16.*

* *2 Pet. 2. 5, 6.*

|| *Jude 7.*

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But tho' he has not left himself altogether without Witness this Way in any Age, yet we cannot say it is his constant Method, especially with particular Persons. Some great Criminals seem to pass through the World without any sensible Mark of God's Displeasure. Others are not met with till a long Time, possibly many Years after a notorious Crime: And the principal Punishments are stately reserv'd to another Life. This indeed is best suited to a Probation-State, and the saving Design that God has on foot in the World. || *The Lord is not slack concerning his Promise, (as some Men count Slackness) but is long-suffering to us-ward, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to Repentance.* He could soon ease himself of his Adversaries, but is pleas'd to continue the Reprieve, because *He waits to be gracious.* An End must be put to this World, if every Sinner had his Desert immediately. And for God's Honour he has Time enough to vindicate it in an Eternity. It would disorder the present Frame of the World, if he gave but a lesser Token of his Resentment

upon the Commission of every Sin. The Righteous must often be involv'd with the Wicked. Such secret Offences must be discover'd to justify his Proceedings, as it may be are fitter now to be conceal'd; or his Providence would be liable to the same Misconstruction as it is now, when the Cause could not be discern'd. It would take away much of the Use of Faith, or at least depretiate its Excellency: And leave no Room for that Honour God is pleas'd to put on good Men in this World that stand upon the Breach, by sparing others for their Sake. It would rather weaken than confirm the Expectation of a future Judgment, since it might seem to supersede the Necessity of it, if there were a constant and regular Distribution of Rewards and Punishments here. And besides all this, it would annul the Use of Magistracy, which Divine Wisdom has ordained for this very Thing. But though God displays his Wisdom and Goodness in such an Exercise of Long-suffering, yet,

3. Sinners actually (tho' very unreasonably) are apt to take Encouragement from God's Forbearance to carry their Sins

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to a greater Height. * His Goodness ought to lead them to Repentance. And by his Grace it has that Effect upon Some, or there would soon be an End of this Ungodly World. But Many, 'tis to be fear'd the most, despise the Riches of his Goodness, and Forbearance, and Long-suffering: And instead of being softned by the Displays of his Love, are confirm'd in their Hardness and impenitent Heart thereby. Because the Punishments of another Life are not seen and sensible, they either make a shift to disbelieve them, or at least 'tis but a very faint and weak Assent they give 'em, which seldom occurs to their Thoughts, and never descends to their Heart. Or if upon Occasion their Fear is awaken'd, and they cannot help believing something of another World, 'tis imagin'd at a Distance; they can put the evil Day far from them, and say with those in Ezekiel, || The Vision that he sees is for many Days to come, and he prophesies of the Times that are afar off. And so they soon wear out the present Impression, with the flattering Prospect of an After-thought, in a more agreea-

* Rom. 2. 4, 5.

|| Ezek. 12. 27.

ble Season. And for those Judgments that God inflicts on Themselves or Others in this World, they can easily escape the Conviction. They are either Spiritual Judgments, the withdrawing of his Spirit, and *letting them alone*, giving them up to Judicial Blindness and Hardness of Heart; which sort of Punishments are inflicted the most regularly of any in this Life. But though they are the greatest and the most to be fear'd in themselves, yet 'tis the Unhappiness of these Sinners that they are *past feeling* of them; they are easy under them, they take Pleasure in 'em, because they have the more Liberty for gratifying their Lusts. Or if they meet with those of a Temporal Nature, the Connexion between them and the Sins that caus'd them is not a sensible Thing, such as leaves no Room for Cavil; nor do they constantly pursue the Sinner. And therefore they find Ways to elude the Force of them; it may be can perswade themselves that they come by Chance, or they have ready at hand other Instances of prosperous Sinners, which are thought enough to ballance the former. And hence they easily conclude with the *Epicurean*,
that

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that * *all things come alike to all; there is one Event to the righteous and to the wicked, to the good and to the clean, and to the unclean, to him that sacrificeth, and to him that sacrificeth not; as is the good, so is the Sinner; and he that sweareth, as he that feareth an Oath.* Thus though in Truth their Judgment (now of a long time predicted and pronounc'd, yet) *lingers not, and their Damnation slumbers not:* Tho' good Men see them on the Brink of Ruin, and heartily pity them, who have no Compassion on themselves; yet we cannot but see by every Day's Experience, that in Fact this is the Improvement that many Sinners make of God's Forbearance. Therefore,

4. 'Tis hence very evident, that there is great Need of some other Restraints at present to keep ill Men within tolerable Bounds. That since they will not be influenc'd by Things unseen and future, and can dispute away the Force of God's Occasional Rebukes; their Insolence may be repress'd by what is present and sensible. And though they *fear not God*, may be made to regard Man; or else be held in as with

* Eccles. 9. 2.

|| 2 Pet. 2. 3.

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Bit and Bridle. That while the Spiritual Government of God is contemn'd, a visible Authority may keep them in Awe. Every one is sensible of this, as to such *evil Works* as directly touch their Lives or Properties, because they are injurious, or may be so, to Themselves. But if we could be perswaded to extend our Regard beyond our selves, and enlarge the Measure of our Judgment in this Case, by taking in the Honour of God, the Good of the Offenders, and the Welfare of Civil Society; We should see a Necessity of present Animadversion on other *Evil Works*, particularly on Those you are concern'd to punish.

1st. If we have any Sense of our Duty as Men and Christians, *the Honour of God* should lie near our Hearts. Not only to make it the Governing End of our own Actions; but to promote it in the World, and prevent to our Power the open Contempt of His Majesty, and Violation of His Laws. Good Parents or Masters will not suffer these unrestrain'd in their Children or Servants. Nor does our Concern end there, if we are in a Capacity of farther Influence. God expects we should *honour him* this Way, and counts the
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Neglect of it a *|| despising him*. Now to be sure by this Rule *profess'd Atheism* at least needs a present Check, as destroying all Reverence for God at once : And *Common Swearing*, which by a prophane Familiarity breeds Contempt. And as the *Lord's Day*, by Divine and Human Appointment, is the Stated Time for keeping up the Solemn Worship of God among us, without which Religion could hardly subsist ; 'tis highly necessary the Reverence and strict Observation of it should be maintain'd. And *open Immoralities*, which by the Consent of all are indisputable Violations of his Law, call for a publick Discountenance.

2dly. If we add *the Good of the Offenders themselves*, present Restraints are needful, as an apt Means to prevent their running desperately on their own Ruin in Soul and Body. I need not tell you that their Bodies and Estates, as well as their Souls, are liable to be made a Sacrifice to Drunkenness and Uncleaness. Or that this should excite your Compassion to them ; none of you having a Right to say, *Am I my Brother's Keeper* ? That Law

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of Love, on which hang all the Law and the Prophets, evidently requires it. And the Command is exprefs, * *Thou ſhalt not hate thy Brother in thy Heart ; thou ſhalt in any wiſe rebuke thy Neighbour, and not ſuffer Sin upon him.*

If any ſhould ſay, Punishments are unapt Means of their Amendment, becauſe they cannot convince the Mind, and change the Heart. And that This is contended for by Many in Matters of Faith, and the leſſer Differences in Practice and Worſhip among Chriſtians. Why then ſhould it not be thought as improper a Means of reclaiming them from their Vices ?

I am unwilling, nor have I any Occaſion, to enter upon a Controverſy here. Though this be granted true in Matters of Faith, yet there is ſo obvious a Difference in the Caſe of Immoralities, that though it ſhould not be proper for the Cure of Errors, yet it may be ſerviceable to the Conqueſt of Vice. In Erroneous Opinions there may be a miſinformed Conſcience, which God ſeems to have reſerv'd to himſelf to judge of, who alone

* Lev. 19. 17.

knows what Degree of Sincerity and Diligence has been used in searching after Truth. And 'tis Light alone that can rectify Misapprehension. But this cannot be pretended in the other Case. If Vicious Men act not against plain Convictions, yet they cannot say they make Conscience of their evil Courses. And therefore though it may be hard to use Force in the other Case to bring Men to consider, when They solemnly profess that they have consider'd already, and believe themselves in the Right: Yet here it may engage them to bethink Themselves; since 'tis certainly Want of Thought, and stifling their Reason and the Light of Nature, that emboldens them in Vice. Indeed you seem to have no other way of Access to the Minds of some hardned People, but by beginning at a Part that remains tender, the Sense of their present and external Welfare. And tho the Forbearance of Sin meerly for Fear of the Lash of the Law is not saving; yet if they are brought thus far, it may give them an Opportunity for serious Thoughts, which they had no room for in the constant Indulgence of their Lusts: And it affords 'em a proper Oc-

caſion too, when they ſee what their Sins coſt 'em now, to think what they are to expect from the Living God hereafter. And when we ſee that Rebukes which come in the common Courſe of Providence are ſometimes ſanctify'd to bring || *a Prodigal to himſelf*, which are more liable to be e- vaded; we may expect that good Effect much more from thoſe Evils which are undeniably the Fruit of his Sin. You have then an Opportunity to expreſs a very noble Charity to your Neighbour's Soul and Body this way, as much as by conſining a Madman, or reſtraining one in the Height of a Fever.

3dly. We muſt take in alſo *the Peace and Welfare of Civil Society*, which indeed is the moſt direct End of preſent Punishments. And this calls for 'em not only in the Caſe of Murder, and Theft, and Adultery, and Cheating; but for thoſe other *Evil Works* alſo, which you apply your ſelves to oppoſe. Since they diſturb the publick Peace both *Naturally* and *Morally*.

You have been often put in Mind, how *profane Oaths* and *Curses* weaken the Bonds of Society, by abating the Reverence of

God, and Fear of an Oath. You all see how *Drunkennes* not only unfits a Man for Publick Service, but prepares him for any Disorders. How *Uncleanness* vitiates the Mind, and introduces many other Vices, besides its endangering the Corruption of other sober and vertuous Persons. How *Both* waste the Health and Estates of many that might be very useful to the Publick: How they occasion the Ruin of their Families, the Wrong of their Creditors, and bring the Charge of their Lawful or Illegitimate Children upon their Neighbours. You cannot but apprehend the Prejudice to the Rising Age, if young People are not well-principled in Religion, and oblig'd for that purpose to an Attendance on the *Lord's Day Worship*. And especially that if they are not so imploy'd, they are led into ill Company and Courses, which prove their own Ruin, and the Grief and Prejudice of their Parents or Masters. You have seen in your own Observation, or learn'd it from the Confessions of the Guilty themselves, that from these lower Beginnings most take their Rise, before they come to the more notorious Mischiefs to Society, such as every body

calls for Justice against. Should not they be prevented therefore in their first Springs and Causes? Can any one that loves his Country be indifferent, whether a Stop be put to them or no? Can any thinking Man be so, if he looks no farther than himself? For how remote soever any of these Consequences may now seem from *You*, they may soon come to touch you very nearly. You may soon feel the Progress of Irreligion in your Trades, by the Frauds of such *as have no Fear of God before their Eyes*. Your own Life or Estate may soon be in Danger by a bold Perjury. You would hardly think Uncleanneſs a harmless Thing, if you found your own Relations corrupted by it. If your Children or Servants get into ill Company and Houses on the Lord's Day, 'tis great odds, but you soon feel the Expence of it your selves. Every honest Man, every good Citizen, therefore should think himself concern'd to suppress Immorality, because it has as *Natural* a Tendency to the Publick Damage, and his own in that of the Publick, as a Raging Fire to consume your City, or a sweeping Pestilence to carry off your Inhabitants.

But

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But that is not all, 'tis a *Moral* Enemy too to the Peace of Society. As this World is under the Government of God, Communities especially are to expect Good or Ill at his Hands, according to the Prevalency of Vertue or Vice. Where notorious Sins are suffered to go on without Controul, God accounts it a National Offence; which he must animadvert upon himself, since Men will not. Whereas Publick Discountenance takes off the Crime from the Society, and gives ground to hope for the Marks of Divine Favour. * *Hate the Evil, (says God) and love the Good, and establish Judgment in the Gate; it may be that the Lord God of Hosts will be gracious to the Remnant of Joseph.* How low does he condescend to *Israel*? † *Run ye to and fro thro' the Streets of Jerusalem, and see now and know and seek in the broad Places, if ye can find a Man, if there be any that executes Judgment, that seeks the Truth, and I will pardon it.* Who would not be ambitious to be the Man, whom God should thus delight to Honour? We find he actually did put a Stop to a fore

* *Amos 5. 15.*

† *Jer. 5. 1.*

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Plague upon *Israel*, upon || *Phinehas's* executing Judgment. Indeed the whole History of his Providence towards that People, confirms this as his standing Rule, that bold Licentiousness unpunish'd awaken'd him to Judgment: And when That had rais'd *them* out of their Security, to put their Laws vigorously in Execution, he return'd to them in Mercy. 'Tis therefore absolutely necessary there should be present Restraints on notorious Sinners in this Season of Divine Forbearance; which was the fourth Proposition.

5. *God has actually given a Power for this Purpose to Magistrates.* As Reason shews the Need of it, so Revelation shews it to be an essential Part of their Office. They are † sent by God for the Punishment of Evil-doers, as well as the Praise of them that do well. They are design'd for * a Terror to evil Works. Revengers to execute Wrath upon him that does evil. And they attend continually upon this very Thing. Herein They are God's Ministers, as They are several Times call'd

|| *Psal.* 106. 30.

† *1 Pet.* 2. 14.

* *Rom.* 13. 3, 4. ver. 6.

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in that Chapter. 'Twas the Voice of God in the Law of Nature, that there should be a Magistracy; and that where-ever that Office should be lodg'd, and by whatever Means convey'd, this should be understood to be included in it, a Power to punish *evil Works*. And upon this Account the Regular Sentence of the Magistrate may justly be called the Sentence of God. But the Institution of the Magistracy on this Design has been so clearly represented to you by a *Reverend Person* * *now with God*, that I shall not pretend to enlarge. Only desire Leave to mention one Passage of his on that Occasion, that † “ Next to “ the sweet Airs and Breathings of the “ Gospel it self, we have not a kinder or “ more significant Discovery of God’s “ Good-Will to Men than the Institution “ of Magistracy.

6. And Lastly, *If Magistrates are negligent, or dilatory in executing their Sentence against Evil Works, or if they are not capacitated for it; the Consequence in the Text must be expected, that the Hearts*

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† Page 18.

of the Sons of Men will be fully set in them to do Evil. If ill Men apprehend that neither God nor Man will call them to an Account, what should keep them in? If there be the best Laws against 'em, (as Thanks be to God we have) what can they signify without this? They * *seem* then to *bear the Sword in vain*; and they *which do Evil will not be afraid*. When this was the Case in Israel, † *the Lord saw it, and it displeased him that there was no Judgment.* Connivance is little better than Commission in God's Account. The Nobles of Judah are charg'd with || *profaning the Sabbath-day*, when they suffer'd others to do it. What God has reserv'd to Himself as his own Peculiar, it were enough that he has always Reason to justify his Proceedings therein to his own Blessed Self, tho' he gave us no Account of the Matter. But for what he has committed to Men, they cannot wave it at their own Pleasure without a Crime. The same Good of the World, which is one Thing that he has in his Eye in the Exercise of his Forbearance, requires a

* Rom. 13. 4.

† Isa. 59. 15.

|| Nehem. 13. 17.

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present Restraint from Men. And the same Reason which makes it requisite at all, requires the doing it speedily, that the Hearts of the Sons of Men may not be fully set in them to do Evil. This may include three Things.

1. The Offenders themselves, who are born with, will be like to grow worse and worse. Many young Sinners might be recover'd by the timely Application of this Remedy, though *for the present not joyous but grievous* both to the Physician and the Patient. * *As the Rod of Correction may contribute to cure the Foolishness that is bound up in the Heart of a Child,* while he is young and tractable: So the timely Severities of the Magistrate may check, and possibly recover some Offenders that are just arrived at Maturity, if made Use of at first: Either such as had the Unhappiness of negligent Parents, or that seem to be got above their Restraint. Whereas if no Notice is taken of them in those early Days, they are like enough to arrive in Time at such a Degree of Folly and Obstinacy, that || *though*

* Prov. 22. 15.

|| Prov. 27. 22.

you should bray them in a Mortar, yet would not their Foolishness depart from them. Impunity is taken for a Licence, so that they go on to add Sin to Sin; boldly to repeat the same Acts, till they come to a Habit; and to advance from lower to higher and more enormous Crimes.

2. Others that as yet are promising and hopeful will be in great Danger of Infection. 'Tis like to increase the Number of Crimes and of Criminals too. One great End of Punishment is, that * *all the People may hear and fear, and do no more presumptuously.* And when 'tis steadily and impartially executed, we may hope for such an Effect. || *When a Scorners is punished, the simple is made wise.* It may be hop'd especially that those who have had a good Education will escape the Contagion, when they find the usual Temptations that are offer'd to insnare them, ballanc'd by present Shame and Suffering in the Ways of Sin. Whereas the Example and Activity of ill Men must spread Profaneness and Vice like Wild-fire, as long as it has the Advantage of being on the Side of corrupt Nature, if they see their Way

* Deut. 17. 13.

|| Prov. 21. 11.

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free, and meet with no Disturbance? And hereupon,

3. The very Power of suppressing and restraining them will be weakned. The Criminals are like to encrease so fast in Number and Power, that it may be next to impossible to stem the Tide, which might without much Difficulty have been resisted at first. This is the Natural Effect of the Non-Execution of Justice; the Government it self is weakned, when the Offenders have Time to unite their Counsels, to strengthen their Interests, and make Accessions to their Number. Tho * *Hand joining in Hand* cannot secure *the wicked*, that *they shall* altogether be unpunished: Tho they cannot controul the Hand of God, when *he makes a Way to his Anger*, yet they may prevent Human Punishments.

Thus I have gone through the Argument I intended, and may now,

Secondly, Proceed on that Foundation to make a particular Application to the Business of the present Assembly. And I believe you can easily go along with

* Prov. II. 21.

me in collecting or inforcing most of what is necessary to be said to you, from that which has been already propos'd.

I. This clearly justifies and commends the Usefulness and Necessity of *your Worthy Societies* : As much as the most valuable End can recommend the most fit and proper Means of attaining it. Indeed he must have an uncommon Share of Ill Nature, or think his Neighbours have, that can imagine any Thing but the Necessity of the Case could induce you to form your selves into such Bodies. Expence and Dangers, Reproaches and Frowns, (which have so often come to your Share,) are not us'd to be inviting Things, when no Secular Advantage is in prospect to compensate them beside the Publick Good. I hope you can defy your most malicious Adversaries to shew, that any Thing but an Heroic Zeal for God and your Country inspired you in this Matter. I'm sure that Principle (all Things consider'd) would lead to act just as you do.

The *Works* you oppose are undoubtedly *Evil*. You are not perplex'd with a Doubt here, whether the Laws of God and Man don't clash in the Case ; or whether you should

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should not at last *be found Fighters against God*, as in many of the Matters in Controversy among Christians. You are not put to a Stand by the Evidences of Piety and Charity in those you contest with. But these Things the Laws of Christianity, and of all well regulated Communities, agree in discountenancing. They are such as the Consciences of the Offenders, as well as the Laws of your Country, pronounce Sentence against; Such as all good Men *vex their righteous Souls with*; Such as will not only cast Men at the Bar of God hereafter, but for which *His Wrath comes on the Children of Disobedience* here: Such as your Selves, your Families, your Neighbours, the present Age and Posterity are in Danger from. We are ready to say, when Men so notoriously make void all Laws, * *'Tis Time for thee, Lord, to work*. But since we cannot expect That, surely 'tis high Time for All that are on the Lord's Side to bestir themselves.

And how can Magistrates bestir themselves, if they are not assisted by the

* *Psal.* 119. 126.

People? Their own Eyes and Ears cannot be Witnesses to every punishable Crime; but They must see and hear by the Help of others. The Wisdom of the Nation has establish'd excellent Laws among us: Our Gracious Queen has given Publick Notice by Her Proclamations, that they were not design'd to lie dormant: And Thanks be to God Many in Authority under Her have shewn Themselves ready to countenance the Execution. Must not the Fault then devolve at last on private Persons, if *the Faces of bold Sinners are not fill'd with Shame?* Your Informations must give the Laws Life and Spirit. The Case then comes to this plain Issue: Either these are not Crimes fit to be punish'd, or None are without an Obligation to help it forward. None are too Great to be above it; None too mean to be unconcern'd in it.

The Experience of several Years has shewn You, *Gentlemen of the Societies*, the Benefit of acting in Concert, and in the Way of a Form'd Design. And 'tis so plain a Case in it self, that one would think it should not want a Vindication

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cation to others. Where Property is concern'd, those that find Themselves aggriev'd, seldom need a Spur to call for the Punishment of Offenders. And yet in that Case you have seen by a late Instance, how much greater Effect the vigorous Application of *One private Citizen* may have that makes it his Business for the Publick Good, than the uniform'd and Occasional Attempts of many more immediately concern'd. But in Crimes that dishonour God, or more remotely affect the Society, less Success is to be expected, unless Some apply Themselves to this very Thing. Few are apt to be sensibly touch'd here; and what is every one's Business is no Body's. And yet Those that offend in this Kind are generally more Numerous and Considerable, more Bold and Bare-fac'd; and therefore require the greater Numbers and Resolution, and Activity, to reduce them to a tolerable Decorum.

The great End you are pursuing commends the Usefulness of all the Parts that compose your Bodies, since They all concur to the common End in their several Provinces. Every Part is honourable,

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because useful and necessary ; the *Heads* of Some to contrive and advise ; the *Feet* and *Hands* of Others for Active Service and Execution ; and the *Purses* of Many, as the Sinews of this War.

A little Thought must certainly convince or Shame into Silence any that are not altogether abandon'd to their Lusts, if any but such can continue to censure your Prudent and Legal Management. And therefore I hope I need not wish, that None of You will be asham'd to speak in behalf of this Cause in any Company, or upon any Occasion, when he hears it disparaged : Or to own himself to *have the Honour to make One* in such a Society.

II. Every good Man should give his best Assistance in such an Undertaking. *When Iniquity is coming in like a Flood*, every one should *lift up a Standard*, or follow it. We the Ministers of the Gospel must still go on to use † *the Weapons of our Warfare*, which are *not carnal*, but Spiritual, the Representation of the Grace and Terrors of the Lord. Where these

† 2 Cor. 10. 4, 5.

are *mighty thro' God to bring every Thought into Captivity to the Obedience of Christ*; they'll make the most effectual Conquest of Vice. And oh that by a more general Success of our Labours, there might remain no Occasion for any violent Restraints! But most are govern'd by Sense and not by Faith; and they must have feeling Arguments, if you would have them effectual. They can adventure to * *run upon God, upon the thick Bosses of his Bucklers*, because unseen; 'Tis Time then for you all to lift up *Yours*, which the Laws of God and your Country have put into your Hands, since they'll regard none but what are obvious to Sense. Should not all Good Men have their Hearts fully set in them to *oppose* Evil, when Others have theirs fix'd upon *doing* it? But Most will rather say, 'tis a praise-worthy Attempt, than concern Themselves in it. They are so far from having a Spirit to lead the Van, that they have scarce enough to come in the Rear. But Vice is not to be run down by Words. If others had been of your Temper, what

* Job 15. 26.

a deplorable Case had we been in by this Time? As I remember, the Rectifying of our Coin, and the first Notice of your Reforming Design from the Pulpit, were much about the same Time. We cannot at this Day look back on the former, without Concern at the Threatning Ruin the Publick escap'd by that timely Remedy : And yet not without Wonder at the Boldness of Those that attempted it. Our Case as to Morals was almost equally deplorable. And yet who can forbear Wonder at the Bravery of those *Noble Few*, that broke the Ice, and laid the Foundation of this Work? Such as now enter upon it, will find a far easier Province, when so many Heads and Hands are already united, the Course of Proceedings fix'd, the Strangeness of the Attempt worn off, all plausible Objections answer'd, by above 12 Years Experience, and People of all Ranks and Denominations concern'd in it. But yet there is Room, and Need for the Assistance of any that are willing. And is it fit that *other Men should be eas'd, and they alone burden'd*, when the Cause is of common Concern, and we are all threatned with
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the Danger? As the Matter is circum-
stanced, I doubt you can assign no better
Reason for standing off, than either
Cowardice or Covetousness. They in-
treat you to come in and help Them, by
your Presence at their Consultations; by
discovering Vice when it comes within
your Notice; by your Prayers; and those
of you that are able, by your Purfes.
Sure you cannot think it much to honour
God, and serve your Country, by some
Annual Contributions for this Common
Service. Nor would you at another Day
reckon it a *Legacy* ill bestow'd to leave
something behind you to this Use, when
you can no longer be serviceable in the
World your selves.

III. This may be a persuasive Argument
to such as are engag'd in this Work, *not to
be weary in well-doing*, but to continue
their Contest against *Evil Works*. As
long as there are bold Sinners unwearied
in committing them, let not Good Men
be weary of confronting them. You
have had so much Success, as may satis-
fy you, that you have not *laboured for
very Vanity*, though it may have been *in
the Fire*. Those that have known this

City for any Time, cannot but remark that open Vice had another Appearance here 12 Years ago than it has now ; and some of you have told me, that your Reproofs for an Oath, or the like, are received in another manner than they would have been then. I hope there are fewer Transgressors ; but certainly they offend not with so high a Hand as formerly. You can see them blush, and confess their Fault, who once would out-face you, and say, *What have we done?* You have shewn them *that neither feared God, nor regarded Man*, that there are some as fearless on God's Side. Where You have not recovered the Sinner, yet You have prevented many Acts of Sin, or the National Guilt afterwards by the Execution of Justice. You have generally had the Countenance of Sober Men of all Ranks and Denominations, and several Magistrates ready to execute the Sentence upon your Application.

There is one obvious Effect, of as kind an Aspect as any of the rest ; That it has promoted a right Understanding among Good People of different Sentiments in lesser Things, and shewn that real Goodness

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ness cannot fail to be a more effectual Cement of Affections than any little Peculiarities, when once it has the Opportunity of being known.

These are some of the great and promising Effects of so good a Design. That some Difficulties remain, only opens a Field for the Exercise of your Faith and Patience. You'll hardly be discourag'd by them, unless you had rais'd your Expectations too high for this World, that is, as high as your Wishes, to banish open Sin quite out of it. But as long as the *God of this World* goes to and fro in it, and there is a corrupt Nature, That is not to be expected. As you'll find the Remains of Sin in your selves to oppose, till you come to the State of Perfection: So you must reckon upon its Being and Efforts in the World, till you arrive at *the New Heavens and New Earth, wherein dwells Righteousness*. Let none of you then be *faint or wearied in your Minds*.

If your Endeavours had had far less Effect; your Master accepts according to the Service, and not the Success. If your Conscience can bear
you

you Witness, that you * *have done what you could*, he'll give you the Reward of faithful Servants. Let none then think much to be imploy'd in This, as a Business for Life. *Blessed are ye, if your Master comes and finds you so doing.*

If you should give over, (and if one do so, have not the rest the same Pretence?) would not the Hearts of such Offenders be more fully than ever set in them to do Evil, as if They had master'd the most likely Way of restraining their Follies? And will it not rather seem Humour, than Zeal for God and your Country, that has carried you thus far? Have you done, *have you suffered so many Things in vain, if They be yet in vain? Will ye also go away, who have born the Burthen and the Heat of the Day?* I speak not This as suspecting you, but to confirm you, my Beloved Brethren, and to solicit you to do nothing that looks like the cooling of your Zeal. Let not ordinary Business make you remiss, and uncertain in Attendance on Meet-

* Mark 14. 8.

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ings of the Society. † *As Iron sharpens Iron, so does the Countenance of a Man his Friend.* Let not any have Occasion for that poor Sarcaſm on you, that in this Work you act the Buſy-Bodies, from your uſing a Plea that ſeems to intimate, 'tis fit for none but Thoſe that have nothing elſe to do.

Let me but add one Thing more to keep up your Zeal at its Primitive Pitch. The State of the Nation calls for ſomething extraordinary from good Men at preſent. When God has done ſuch great Things for us *the laſt Year*, methinks 'tis our Turn to do great Things for Him in *This*. And *the Union* which Divine Providence has effected ſo lately in this Iſland, ſhould certainly excite our Zeal for *Reformation of Manners*, if it were for nothing elſe but that we might not come behind our *Northern Brethren* in that known * Part of their Character,

† *Prov.* 27. 17.

* *Dr. Edwards in his late Diſcourſe on the Union, p. 20, 21. tells us.* We ſhall be encouraged not only to Strictneſs of Diſcipline, but of Life, from the Example of our Brethren, with whom we are united. *He recommends them*

cter, the Strictness of their Morals. God therefore make you *stedfast and unmoveable, and always abounding in his Work*

IV. And, *Lastly*, Give me leave to suggest some Directions in your Work from the Subject I am upon.

We may plainly collect, how much it concerns Reformers of others to be blameless Themselves. When you are their Monitors and Physicians, it will ill become you to be obnoxious to the same Sentence your selves. † *Thou art inexcusable, O Man, that judgest another, if thou dost the same Things.* Indeed instead of reforming Them, you'll but confirm their Disposition to do Evil.

And certainly you should have a very awful Sense of the Authority and Sentence of God, when you call those to an Account that break thro' all *his* Bonds. You should be acted by that better Principle of a Regard to God in all, when

them for their exact Observation of the Lord's Day; and observes, that this has an Influence on their whole Lives. And after other Instances of their exemplary Character, adds, We stand in need of such Patterns as these, and it will concern us to follow Them with great Diligence, that thereby a Blessing may be deriv'd on the whole Community.

† *Rqm. 2. 1.*

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the Foundation of your Work is this, that the Sinners you have to do with disregard Him.

You see also the Ends that ought constantly to be kept in view in your Proceedings. To be sure not to gratify Spleen and Revenge; I cannot think you need the Admonition. But to vindicate the Honour of God, to promote the Good of the World, and the Amendment of the Sinner, and to prevent the farther Growth and Progress of Vice.

Consequently 'tis plain, that some Distinction must be made according to the evident Disposition of the Offenders. You cannot think I have press'd you to so speedy an Execution of the Laws, as to have no Consideration of Circumstances: To expose a Person always to Publick Shame for the first Offence, or when there is Reason to believe he is *overtaken with a Fault*, and has a Tenderness of Conscience remaining to be wrought upon by Argument. Such a Course might make some Sinners desperate, instead of recovering them. But it will be proper to carry St. Jude's Direction in your Mind;

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Mind; || *Of some have Compassion, making a Difference: And others save with Fear, pulling them out of the Fire.* The more impartial you are in executing the Laws without making a Distinction of High and Low, Rich and Poor, Friends and Strangers, so much the better. But to make a Difference according to their Hardness or Tenderneſs in Sinning, is a neceſſary part of Prudence for gaining your Great End. Where you have Ground to hope God's Sentence has ſtill Authority, and ſoft Rebukes may reform the Criminal, they are undoubtedly firſt to be uſ'd: And then you gain your Brother the beſt and the pleaſanteſt Way. But where there is a daring Boldneſs, you can expect little Succeſs that way. Reproof is to no purpoſe to a Scornor. If you * *reprove him*, you'll gain only Shame, and a Blot to your ſelves. But † *ſmite a Scornor*, and the Simple will beware. While you wiſely follow this

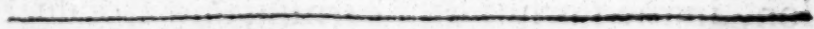
|| Ver. 22, 23.

* Prov. 9. 7, 8.

† Prov. 19. 25.

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Course, expressing your Charity and Zeal in Conjunction, the Blessing of God, and the Prayers of all good Men will go along with you.



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